

Synod 2021 2023

Synthesis of Local Listening Phase

at

St Pius X Parish, South Yarmouth MA

Synod Team:

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Synod 2021 2023: Synthesis of Listening Phase

At St. Pius X Parish, Synod 2021 2023 kicked-off at meetings where the nature and purpose of the 16th Synod of Bishops was explained for parish leaders. We also used these opportunities to recruit a parish synod team. On February 3 the two ambassadors met with the parish council via zoom. Next, we reached out to leaders of the various parish ministries in three separate zoom sessions in March. By the end of March, a team of seven had been assembled who then planned and conducted the parish-wide consultation session held on May 1. What we heard there from the 35 participants present, three emailers who were unable to attend, and six team members, we summarize here.

St. Pius X is a large, active parish that has been stifled during Covid. We celebrate Eucharist daily and five times each weekend increasing the number of these celebrations during the summer season. Our physical campus includes a spacious worship space, the Parish Hall was the former worship space that has been repurposed for faith formation and other activities, a rectory/office, the Parish Life Center housing a large auditorium, meeting rooms, and an industrial kitchen, a school building, a satellite chapel, and ample parking at both locations. We support various ministries serving in some cases beyond our parish boundaries. We educate and catechize youth in our school and faith formation programs. A vibrant music ministry enhances our liturgical celebrations. Several prayer groups are active. Meal programs reach out to elderly and needy individuals. Parishioners can interact socially at bingo, monthly Sunday breakfasts, book clubs, craft groups, fairs, picnic, or Trunk-or-Treat to name just a few such activities. These varied experiences offered at St. Pius give evidence that journeying together is happening. Our liturgies and accompanying music, varied other ministries, facilities and social events were explicitly praised during our parish-wide consultation. Many participants yearned for these stifled ministries and activities to be restored to their former vitality.

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The consultation also revealed that journeying together is not without hindrances. Four general areas were identified as hindering progress: communication, evangelization within the community, clericalism, and the absence of women in leadership positions.

Participants expressed some dissatisfaction with communication channels and means. The parish quarterly newsletter, which ceased publication sometime before Covid infected us, seemed to be a specific concern expressed here. Yet, other organs sprouted as the parish deployed Facebook, its website, and email “blasts” more effectively. Even though parish staff contact information is available on its website or in the bulletin, many admitted not knowing to whom certain questions should be addressed. For example, although we are blessed to be served by six permanent deacons, participants do not know which deacons are aligned with which ministries, if any.

Similar concerns were also expressed about Diocesan communication means. At one time, the parish subsidized *The Anchor*. In return, it received a limited number of free subscriptions that were distributed among ministry volunteers; this practice ended when parish subsidies ended. As a result, some such subscribers did not pay to continue these formerly gratis subscriptions.

Obviously, the reach of this traditional mode of communication diminished. Social media such as the Bishop’s Blog and *fallriverdiocese.org* as well as *The Anchor* offer opportunities to communicate with the local church faithful and at the same time counter the ideological extremes on the internet falsely parading as the voice of the magisterium.

Evangelizing, or catechizing, parish youth was a common concern, too. Impressions that attendance at weekend liturgies by this age cohort has dwindled especially during Covid reflect an already existing trend that may be accelerating. In addition, participants expressed a thirst for adult religious education.

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Clericalism was another recurring theme causing concern. The term as used here describes a complex phenomenon. It arises as much from a failure of some lay persons to exercise their baptismal responsibilities to be priests, prophets, and kings as it does from some ordained ministers exceeding their power: a complacent laity deferring to “whatever father says” is just as insidious to journeying together as a pastor who projects a my-way-or-the-highway” attitude or avoids consulting with the parish. The synodal process must be an exercise in co-responsibility seeking guidance from the Spirit. Repeatedly, participants observed that our pastors have been overburdened. Adding a parochial vicar would have little effect on reducing this burden. The consensus among participants was that attention to parish administration crowds out time for pastoral care. This was seen especially so for matters that a competent lay business manager could undertake. In general, participants felt that laity were underutilized in leadership roles.

A final recurring theme focused on the role of women. Because far fewer women are at the table as decisions are taken, their voices go unheard, and their experiences and capabilities go underutilized. This feeling pervaded the group even though it acknowledged that women lead the parish school and faith formation programs.

[At the May 1 parish-wide consultation, six small groups discussed the two fundamental synod questions. Each small group consisted of 5-7 participants including a note-taking synod team member. On May 10, the team convened via Zoom to review and synthesize these notes. Two compilations of these six sets of table discussion notes were made and are included as Appendices A and B. For Appendix A, numerals preceding responses to the fundamental questions indicate the number of times a given response appeared in the recorders’ notes.]

Appendix A

What are the joys of parish life?

- 4 Music Ministry, including welcoming folks into it
- 3 Varieties of ministries
- 3 Masses, including daily Masses
- 3 Prayer groups, devotionals, Eucharistic Adoration
- 2 Social events, fairs, women's society, K of C, Bingo
- 2 Children's liturgies
- 2 Monthly breakfasts
- 1 Welcoming community
- 1 Lay participation
- 1 Good liturgies
- 1 Good property stewardship
- 1 Sacraments
- 1 Faith Formation
- 1 Adult Education including bible study, RCIA, parish mission
- 1 Ushers/greeters
- 1 Sense of community
- 1 Plays/Drama
- 1 Summer influx
- 1 Newcomer parishioners are assets

What are the obstacles to journeying together?

- 4 Pastors have too much responsibility, workload is too great
- 3 Publicity and communications opportunities
- 1 Parish / school division
- 1 Christian witness opportunity within the school
- 1 Role of the laity is diminished
- 1 Roles of women are diminished
- 1 Diminished participation of families / youth. Competition with sports.
- 1 Need more ecumenical engagement
- 1 Need documented deacon to ministry mapping
- 1 Inclusive language updates needed
- 1 Restore parish nurse, CPR course
- 1 Restore altar servers/gift bearers
- 1 Restore Eucharist to homebound
- 1 Divine Mercy Ministry
- 1 New Member's dinner
- 1 Coffee hour
- 1 Divine Mercy Ministry

Appendix A

What steps does the Spirit invite us to take?

Promote better dialogue

Promote better participation

Promote better development of ideas

Promote vocations. All roles. Clergy and lay roles.

Re-visit and promote the principles of Catholic Social Teaching

Engage Catholics at every level

Promote education

Understand the message coming from the declining number of priests and the declining number of families and youth.

Understand that the Holy Spirit is infused in the synodal process.

Appendix B

Question 1: What are the joys of your parish life?

- Sacramental nourishment helps celebrate good days and get through bad days
- Masses – daily Masses and socializing pre-covid
- Monthly breakfasts (miss it)
- Many ministries
- Faith formation
- Doors to church now open
- Prayer groups- rosary, vocation, monthly holy hour (Thursday before 1st Friday)
- Plays, drama – Christ Song by Mark Girard, Godspell, Tales of Wonder. Brought groups together.
- Bingo- makes money for the parish –Since July they have raised \$71,000.00
- Fairs

Question 2: What obstacles to this journeying together have you encountered?

- Knights of Columbus is not a missionary of the Catholic Church. They feel they should be.
- No publicity about happenings in parish
- Rosary need to be published so new people can join. People feel excluded. Small group
- No families and youth
 - High school athletics
 - Other happenings, example Red Sox played on Good Friday at 2 pm
- People are insecure going to bird sanctuary- feel isolated. Add cameras???
- Trucks parked in parking lot (Fr. Paul...deal, rental or donation???)
- More CPR courses/First aid
 - Classes/training for ministries or parishioners
- Parish nurses – bring them back
- DYECH (ecumenical) need more parishioners involved
 - Parish helped Habitat build a house for local family
- New member dinners **invite all new people to dinner and can share all the ministries available in our parish
- Old age – losing their voice...people dying
- Centering prayer group stopped because of covid
- More publicity for ministries
- Reinstate ministries that were closed because of covid
- Homebound need the Eucharist
- Return the altar servers
- Return the bells
- Return to normalcy during Mass
- Gifts brought forward

Appendix B

- Bring back coffee hour

Question 3: What enables or hinders you from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in your parish?

- There is no forum to speak-up
 - People come up to greeters to with questions & comments which are passed on to Fr. John
- No reaction – hits dead zone
- RCIA colleagues don't want him to speak about catechism –off-putting
- Less people seeking pastor because they know he's so busy.
- People don't know who to go to—don't want to bother the office staff (helpline????)
- No sense of community---solitary---no coffee hour (socialization)
- Lack of welcoming new people
- No social interactions

Question 4: What steps does the spirit invite us to take to grow in this journeying together?

- Notice in the bulletin for comments or concerns that is bold or highlighted with a separate email address or basket located in the Church. They want to get a response from someone reading the comments. (not necessarily someone in the office and most especially not the Pastor)
- Patience & action are needed
- Service
- Prayers to end covid

Other interesting comments:

- girls in the office are courageous
- sympathy for the pastor's lot (all alone...big parish no other priests)

Question that they would like answered

- How many registered parishioners are there?
- How many attend Mass?